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TEACHING ETHNIC GROUPS.

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THE MAJOR THEME OF FIVE PAPERS OF A PANEL IS THE NEED FOR TEACHERS TO UNDERSTAND THE DIVERSE CULTURES AND VALUE SYSTEMS OF THEIR PUPILS. SISTER FRANCIS MAUREEN POINTS UP THE SENSITIVITIES AND CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS OF PUERTO RICAN CHILDREN, AND REVEREND JOSEPH FITZPATRICK REMARKS ON THE INTENSE FAMILY FEELING, NONCOMPETITIVE ATTITUDES, AND LACK OF COLOR BIAS AMONG THIS GROUP. VERA JOHN REVIEWS THE TRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL THEORIES USED IN SCHOOLS FOR INDIANS AND MEXICAN-AMERICANS AND CRITICIZES THE STRESS IN THEM ON LEARNING ENGLISH. SHE FEELS THAT A BICULTURAL AND BILINGUAL SYSTEM WOULD BE MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE. GLORIA MATTERA'S REPORT ON MIGRANT CHILDREN STRESSES THE NEED FOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT, AND DIRECT CONTACT WITH, THE CULTURE OF THESE PEOPLE. SHE RECOMENDS THAT LANGUAGE, VOCABULARY, AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT BE BASED ON THE PUPIL'S OWN EXPERIENCES AND THAT TEACHERS IMPROVE THE CHILD'S SELF-CONCEPT. MARCELLA WILLIAMS DISCUSSES THE NEED FOR PROGRAMS TO DEVELOP IN TEACHERS DIAGNOSTIC SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR ENHANCING THE NEGRO STUDENT'S SELF-CONCEPT. GEORGE BLAIR, THE SUMMARIZER, NOTES THE SUPERFICIAL REPETITIONS OF THE OBVIOUS AND THE PLATITUDINOUS STRATEGIES WHICH THE PANEL OFFERS. HE SAYS THAT THE ISSUE OF QUALITY INTEGRATED TEACHING AND LEARNING WAS SIDESTEPPED AND THAT THE EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENT APPEARS TO OPT TO PRESERVE THE "STATUS QUO." (NH)

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TEACHING ETHNIC GROUPS

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SUMMARY Our panel did not make very astute analysis of the problem of mis-education and non-education of disadvantaged students, nor did they offer specific recommendations which would significantly ameliorate the educational problem which they attempted to describe. Presentations by the panel members and the general discussion that followed, were basically commentaries on the obvious, stated in very shallow and superficial contexts.

It should be noted that confusion, a shortage of empirical data, and a recently developed enthusiasm for practical ideas were characteristic in the discussions of our knowledge of the education of *Americans* who are classified as "disadvantaged." There seemed to be no solid agreement about the identity of the students for whom education is not working. Such students were variously called "culturally deprived," "disadvantaged," "underprivileged," etc. All categories, however, included a disproportionate number of Negroes, Indians, and Puerto Ricans.

Educational gimmicks such as "extra support" classes, "tender loving care," and "substitute mothers and fathers," will not suffice, nor are they adequate substitutes for quality integrated teaching and quality integrated learning.

REACTION American educators do know how properly to educate all children, even children of the non-vocal economically "disadvantaged." Do American educators have the inclination and resources to do this worthy educational task? Political, social and economic considerations dictate to educators in power positions that Americans classified as "disadvantaged" should be kept uneducated, disenfranchised, and non-competitive. Scholars such as John Coleman, Kenneth Clark and others have meticulously documented the situation.

We must replace the "social worker" and "do-gooder" concepts which have permeated the establishment and not lend support to the incompetent educational prophets of status quo, despair and doom. The American education system is amenable to, and indeed desires, change, and it is up to its educators to make changes.

The concept of education which this writer advocates is composed of generous portions of competence, responsibility and compassion.

American educators must utilize their competencies to educate properly all of the children of all of the people for efficient and effective life in the greatest democratic country in the history of the world. They must make tough decisions and be willing to accept the consequences of their decisions and acts. Finally, but fundamentally, educators must have compassion for all human beings that is comparable to their competence and sense of responsibility.

In summary, the writer issues this open challenge to each reader and thinker. Join the army for institutionalizing positive educational change in order that the "Great Intellectual War" can be rapidly and successfully won, and the "Great Society" achieved. Lone warriors are doomed to defeat; only together can we win a war we cannot afford to lose or compromise.

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CONCERN FOR PEOPLE

TEACHING ETHNIC GROUPS PUERTO RICANS

Sister Francis Maureen, O.P., Ph.D.

From our day-by-day contact with Puerto Ricans in their home environment has emerged a picture which may prove helpful. In sharing our knowledge with you, we shall simply and sincerely describe Puerto Rico and its inhabitants as we have observed them.

To describe a people by categorizing their strengths and their weaknesses seems to me to lack objectivity. Who can say for example that sensitivity to others' feelings is a weakness or a strength? And yet, this is an important Puerto Rican characteristic which can be misunderstood. Puerto Ricans are highly perceptive of the harmony between one's words and deeds. No words can convince them of sincere interest in them and love for them if actions prove otherwise. The slightest air of superiority is fatal.

This sensitivity is manifested in their use of the word "simpático." If identified by Puerto Ricans as "simpático" a person has won a stamp of approval. Such a person has shown more than empathy, rapport, etc. He has manifested the true meaning of the word "sympathetic": a feeling with and for others. "Una maestra simpática—a sympathetic teacher" will gain the spontaneous and simple devotion of her Puerto Rican pupils.

This type of teacher will truly appreciate the Puerto Rican awareness of their rich Hispanic culture and will strive to deepen it.

Those who work with Puerto Ricans and who have noted their quick acquiescence to any request may not see in this what it is: an unwillingness to hurt. "Sí, sí—yes, yes" or "Cómo no—why not" sound like very gracious expressions until they begin to lose some of their power. Waiting in vain for fulfillment may be aggravating.

Seeing in this habit of conduct an expression of innate courtesy, the teacher who truly understands the Puerto Ricans will not be so quick to condemn. On the contrary, she will try to channel the quixotic Puerto Ricans into the world of realism.

The efficient American may find it difficult at times to understand the seeming lackadaisical attitude of the Puerto Ricans. Before attributing the little consciousness of time and the indifference to appointments to laziness, the teacher will be more effective if she understands the basic reason for this so-called "mañana spirit."

Living in Puerto Rico, with no need to plan for winter fuel or clothing, has led Puerto Ricans to be perfectly satisfied with days and events as they come. Tropical climate requires an approach to living that quick Northerners may not comprehend. It is almost a method of self-preservation.

Puerto Ricans are extroverts, lively, happy, and self-assured. They are quick to laugh and sing. As pupils they are active. These are highly desirable characteristics. But here in the States these same children are soon put on the defensive. Even the English they first learn is of this street, defensive type.

The sensitivity and closeness of the Puerto Rican children is noticed in the classroom when a newcomer is among them. When the teacher gives instructions the "veteran" quickly translates lest the newly-arrived be at a loss.

It is impossible to tell all there could be and should be said in a paper of this limited size. Many questions will remain unanswered.

Even if the questions were available this would be easy. What is *not* easy is to instill in teachers and social workers a love for the people which stems from understanding. Only a person with love in her heart will really be able to educate Puerto Rican children.

A final word to those who work with Puerto Rican children. It is of prime importance to consider more carefully than usual the individuality and personality of each student. The distinctive note of nationality must not be uppermost in the teacher's mind. Rather, it is his humanity that merits first consideration. It is imperative that the teacher believe firmly and practice sincerely the first proposition of the American preamble: All men are created equal.

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CONCERN FOR PEOPLE

TEACHING ETHNIC GROUPS INDIANS AND MEXICAN-AMERICANS

Dr. Vera P. John

The experience of living in poverty, removed from the modern, streamlined communities of mid-twentieth century America, is shared by most Indian and Mexican-American children. The rate of unemployment and job insecurity is high, as it is among all non-white groups in the United States. Thus, many have argued that the problems of school children raised in the homes of the non-white poor are similar. What these groups have in common is their relationship to the dominant society, a relationship that has been variously described in psychological, economic, and political terms. The similarities are greatest in the external relationships of these groups; once one attempts to discover the *internal* structure and organization of life among the Navajo or the Southwest Mexican, significant and pervasive differences emerge, particularly in comparison with Negroes and Puerto Ricans.

The significant fact about the American Indian and many Mexican-American groups is that they have lived on their lands prior to the ascendence of the "Anglo." Therefore, they were not propelled into the mainstream of American life as individuals, or small immigrant groups. Though social contact exists between individuals of the dominant and the minority communities, these groups evolved significant contacts as adjacent communities, tribes, or even nations.

The Indians and the Mexicans in the States have developed their culturally patterned existence before the industrialization of North America, a heritage of contemporary relevance. In discussing the frequency of extended families in these groups, or the deep religiosity of many Indians, knowledge of an agrarian and non-technological culture is necessary.

In a recent study of Mexican-Americans living in Tucson, Henderson found that the social life of the families he studied (who represent a considerable range) still consisted in visiting with their kin only, a pattern strongly at variance with the social life of Anglos in that city. The crucial importance of the grandmother in the life of the Navajo child is another of numerous examples illustrating a pattern of family life of greater similarity to peasant societies in Asia and Africa than to urban America.

The American Indian has been resistant to entering the mainstream of American life to a greater extent than any other group, including the Mexican. The manner in which cultural continuity is assured by America's red men varies considerably from region to region, and tribe to tribe. The Senecas of New York State, for instance, can easily pass for white, when dressed in their city clothes, while few of the Southwest Indians would 'pass.' Nevertheless, both groups have active tribal and religious lives scarcely understood by members of the dominant society.

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What is the educational significance of the existence of low income communities, characterized by enduring and distinct cultures? Education and the acquisition of English by children raised in these communities has been the key feature of governmental policy for the past hundred years. Americanization, a term which rankles the first Americans, could be achieved, government officials and educators have argued, only if the common language of the country becomes the language of choice of all of its citizens.

Methods for accomplishing this aim have changed during the last 100 years; however, a basic belief, first developed in the 19th century, is still fundamental to educational policy with Indian and Mexican children: the sooner they learn the English language the better off they are going to be.

The language barrier is cited as a major obstacle in employment, in eligibility for technical and college education, for individuals raised in non-English speaking American communities. To equip them better for job security in a society where manual jobs are disappearing, the pressure for developing communication skills in English is rising.

Project Head Start is one recent example of an educational program, which among non-English speaking groups has, as its primary focus, the teaching of English to preschool children. These programs are staffed, on the whole, by teachers whose native language is English; consequently, the language of the classroom is English.

But the assumption that children who acquire and shift to English during their earliest years will be academically successful in contrast with those who learn English at a later age, is questioned. In a study I have recently completed, comparing story retelling performance of children of varied ethnic backgrounds, English speaking Navajo children frequently gave poorer performances than those who spoke only Navajo, even though the latter came from families with fewer material advantages.

An important finding was reported by Henderson, in a study mentioned earlier, when comparing two groups of six-year-old, Mexican-American children. The high-potential children in this study were characterized by higher language scores in English as well as in Spanish, than the low-potential children. The reciprocal relationship, so frequently posited between speaking mostly Spanish, and very little English, was not confirmed in his investigation. Research workers and educators are reporting observations that a high level of development of the child's native tongue is a good preparation for school success in English.

A new goal for Indian and Mexican children has been projected by several educators. The aim is the development of a bicultural and bilingual educational system. Such an approach is in its infancy. In the meantime, teachers in training can be helped to become more effective with non-white, non-English speaking children by understanding, first of all, how their own culture is a determinant of their behavior and influences their ability to cope with cultural variations. Survey courses in social sciences leave them, in most instances, fascinated intellectually, but otherwise unchanged. Generalizations are of little practical help in working with the linguistically and culturally *different* child. Glib catchphrases are of no help at all. Programmatic innovations in *teacher education* are needed. The failure in educating the non-exceptional low-income child is just one of many indications in this regard. Recommendations aimed at improving teacher preparation in working with disadvantaged children, who are culturally *different*, have been made by many. Without comprehensive and joint planning on the part of educators, behavioral scientists, the articulate representatives of the Indian and Mexican communities, and the children, new approaches, however well-intentioned, are bound to fail.

CONCERN FOR PEOPLE

TEACHING ETHNIC GROUPS MIGRATORY WORKERS

Dr. Gloria Mattera

Last summer a teacher in a Head Start program had an unusual honor bestowed upon her by a five-year-old. He invited her to a Friday night rumble because, as he put it, "When I have my own gang I want you to be in it—so, you'd better come on Friday to see what we do!" The teacher explained that she—"Ummm—errr—" had another engagement. Understandably, the neophyte rumbler was quite upset about her not accepting his invitation!

I am not advocating our mass attendance at rumbles, but this anecdote reflects the basic reason for this conference on the disadvantaged. We, who pay lip service to "Let each become all he is capable of being", do not empathize enough with these children to know where to start with them in school so that a sequence of steps toward effective citizenship can be initiated.

If middle class teachers are to work successfully with culturally different children, they must have certain basic information on and teaching experience in these children's areas of greatest need, namely: self-concept improvement, language and vocabulary development, skills development, enrichment experiences.

A teacher education program—utilizing lectures, field trips, instructional materials, observation of and experiences with children and direct contact with their environment—can provide the basic teaching skills for each area.

Self-Concept Improvement

Children who are not wanted, not talked to, and then discriminated against in their contacts with the mainstream of society grow up with a poverty of the spirit that does not nurture the desire to learn. If teachers are to acknowledge this fact, they need sociological, historical, and economic background information about the culture, presented by knowledgeable representatives of national, state and local public and private sources, as well as by members of the culture.

A second need is direct contact with the environment. Last year's Geneseo Migrant Workshop participants spent a day visiting a farm and migrant camp and another helping recruit children for summer schools. This year's participants will work with migrants in the field and live, briefly, in the camps.

Lastly, now that teachers have some cognitive and affective bases for understanding these children, they can learn about ways of improving the self-concept, like taking pictures of the children for use on bulletin boards, having them write or dictate stories, accepting them, etc.

Language and Vocabulary Development

Often, these children have their own language patterns, e.g. "Ah is Henry" for "I am Henry". Teachers can be educated to understand the importance of this language pattern to the child's security and to build upon it (not criticize it) by utilizing activities like language pattern games and mock television programs, thus developing language patterns for communication outside their culture. The children still return home and say "*Ah is* Henry", but will use the more generally accepted "*I am* Henry" when the social situation requires it.

Vocabulary or concept development techniques must be demonstrated, for many teachers tend to assume that these children understand the meaning of words like *house, bathroom, lawn,* etc. One teacher, who showed migrant children a picture of a lawn rake, found that they politely registered blank expressions. It is indeed unlikely that they had ever seen or used a lawn rake in the lawnless camp environment. If vocabulary is to have meaning, teachers must provide real experiences (see, touch, use) for visualizing what the words represent.

Conversely, teachers must understand the children's vocabulary. Hiptionaries (word-equivalent charts) developed by children and teacher are excellent for helping the teacher "dig" the language and for expanding the children's vocabulary.

Skill Development

The children's pattern of failure caused by lack of successful skill development in reading, writing and arithmetic makes it imperative for teachers to be able to ascertain where children are in these skills and to guide them step by step. Utilization of games and of content in skills which is adapted to the children's world make learning meaningful and fun.

In reading, short walks followed by discussions provide excellent source material for experience charts that children want to read because the material is about them instead of colorless fictitious characters in readers. Solving and making up problems in arithmetic about experiences they are likely to have (baking, constructing) make infinitely more sense than meaningless repetition of examples like "2 plus 2".

Enrichment Experiences

Often, these children have not had experiences we take for granted, like visiting the supermarket or bank. Helping teachers select such experiences and then discussing educationally sound procedures for incorporating them in the school program will help assure maximum benefit from them.

* * *

The goals of the teacher education program for the four areas just described can be best achieved if the following experiences are an integral part of the program.

> Observation of use of recommended procedures.
> Utilization of these procedures with children under the guidance of consultants (art, music, reading, etc.)
> Examination and use (or adaptation for use) of the latest instructional materials.

This brief look at an education program for teachers of culturally different children focuses on what will most effectively equip the teachers with essential background information, methods and materials. In addition, tape recording all lectures and then making tapescripts of them is an invaluable aid to the teachers who then can have a handy reference when they need it. Also, these tapescripts can serve as instructional materials for future teacher education programs.

Lastly, no program is complete without evaluation by the participants and directors. Throughout, there must be adjustment to suit the group of teachers attending. Subsequently, when the teachers are in their communities working with the children, evaluative visits should be made by the directors and periodic evaluations written by the teachers. These evaluations should be carefully studied so that future teacher education programs can be improved and, consequently, so that culturally different children can be better served.

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CONCERN FOR PEOPLE

TEACHING ETHNIC GROUPS NEGROES

Mrs. Marcella Williams

Teacher education programs traditionally have been concerned with the preparation of teachers to teach children. Only very recently have they begun to prepare teachers to work with disadvantaged children. With this new emphasis, teacher education institutions must focus on different concerns, explore a variety of teaching-learning strategies and help initiate and promote new directions in teacher education.

The prime goal of teacher preparation programs is developing able and effective teachers of children—not just developing teachers to teach Negro children, Indian children, Appalachian white children or Puerto Rican children. While specific knowledge of a subculture is vital to success in teaching children of the subculture, general attitudes toward understanding any subculture are prerequisite.

Among crucial concerns are: 1. training auxiliary personnel; 2. development of special competencies through internships, field experiences and student teaching; 3. development of diagnostic skills and principles; 4. development of techniques which help produce positive self concepts. This paper will elaborate on 3 and 4.

Diagnostic Skills and Principles for Differentiated Education

Among causes of inappropriate teaching strategies are poor selection of content and materials, inadequate approaches, poor teaching-learning atmosphere and lack of systematic and continuing diagnosis of learning needs. Effective teachers build curriculum and instructional materials on analysis of data gathered from and about their charges. Teachers learn to diagnose by diagnosing. During student teaching, prospective teachers can be required to observe children in a specific teaching-learning situation. They can then apply to that real situation what they have learned in their education courses by selecting activities, experiences and materials for the problems diagnosed.

Theoretical course work hopefully helps them to understand learning needs of children, environmental conditions from which they come, social problems they have as a result of traumatic social experiences, exposure and other negative influences.

How do teachers begin diagnostic inquiry? Open-ended questions are often used to tap ideas, concepts and feelings students may have on problems. They provide an unstructured stimulus that will not cue the students to an expected response. Student responses can be secured by speaking into a tape recorder, written composition, or through class discussion and socio-drama or through an interview with the child or his parent.

Assessment of the pupils' background of experiences, the way they feel about school and themselves, the values they hold and their unmet needs which impinge upon learning, are all part of the gestalt of diagnosis. Diagnosis becomes part of every teaching act and a basis for planning the next differentiated learning experience. Daily diagnosis and feedback are needed to help teachers reared in one subculture to develop strategies with children in another subculture.

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How can comprehensive and individual diagnosis be conducted when a teacher has 25 or 30 children with whom to work? One answer may be the efficacious employment of non-professionals who will free the teacher to do more diagnosing and developing of strategies.

Development of Positive Self-Concepts

Some disadvantaged Negro children reflect severely damaged self-images. The full restoration of positive self-images remains the Achilles heel of the teaching profession today. Only recently has the importance of ego development in the education of *all* children become recognized. The importance of this to the educationally disadvantaged is greater because there seems to be a larger proportion of seriously damaged self-concepts among this group. Ideas of self among the disadvantaged group seem to focus on four main themes, the first of which is failure. The children's strongest feeling of failure centers around school, the testing ground in which all children attempt to find a degree of adequacy. It is possible for a child in elementary school to discover that he *can* learn, that he can enjoy learning. Unfortunately, many children in inner city schools discover that they cannot learn, and if they become convinced that this is true, it will become a fact.

The second theme is alienation from people. Many educationally disadvantaged children are aware not only that their parents are failures, but that they are burdens on their parents and are frequently not wanted. This concept may result from inferences on the part of the child, but many times parents will express the idea by words. Alienation by their own age mates, especially rejection by their more privileged peers, is just as devastating.

A third theme is that the unsuccessful student usually sees himself as a victim in many life situations, seldom getting the chance he deserves. These themes, feelings of failure, victimization and alienation, frequently lead to a fourth theme, hopelessness, that there is nothing worth preparing for.

How can teachers help students build positive self-concepts? They can learn to provide opportunities for pupils to participate jointly and equally with the teacher in making important decisions. Teachers can provide opportunities for students to learn from experimentation and from one another rather than directly from the teacher.

Organize curriculum around manipulative experiences with which pupils can have success. Success will partially depend on the teacher's knowledge of the pupil's ability level. Finally, an atmosphere which is not hostile or threatening, but which is stimulating, fair and purposeful should be provided.

Some Recommendations for Implementation of These Concerns

Aside from the changes in content suggested in the aforementioned discussion, some innovations in the total structure of teacher education programs seems to be indicated. One of these might be a teacher internship program. The idea of an internship program is a current one and has been presented in different ways by various teacher educator institutions in the metropolitan area.

The foregoing, then, are two of the critical concerns which ought to receive immediate attention by institutions committed to the preparation of teachers. With adequate techniques in diagnostic skills and principles, the teacher should be able to execute the concepts of differentiated education and achieve a new dimension of relationship with her pupils. In the process of helping children to develop positive self-concepts, the teacher must first understand himself as a person. If he does understand himself, the dual process of strengthening his own ego as well as the child's ego will be accomplished. With this arsenal of strategies and techniques available, hopefully the teacher can help individuals and groups work and grow to the highest levels of their innate abilities.

CONCERN FOR PEOPLE

TEACHING ETHNIC GROUPS PUERTO RICANS

Reverend Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, S. J.

Education is an American institution. It "makes sense" within the framework of American life. To people who do not share that way of life, our educational style may be puzzling, bewildering, sometimes offensive. To make our education more effective, "better," we need insight into the background from which the Puerto Rican comes, to understand more clearly "what things mean to him" so that we may explain to him more clearly "what things mean to us." This may throw light on the way they react to the education we are so anxious to provide for them. Knowing their culture we may be able to offer educational services in such a way that Puerto Ricans will accept the gift, with respect for the giver.

What gives life the "sense it has" to a Puerto Rican is different from what gives life the "sense it has." for us. He knows the simple joys of the human family, the birth of a son, the baptism, the respect of children, the sense of being a man or woman within the framework of roles that he has learned from father or grandfather, of providing for a wife, of caring for the elderly, of bringing his daughter as a virgin to marriage. He knows the troubles of the human family. He is familiar with them on the Island; he feels them more sharply when he moves to New York. He has learned from folklore, not from books or teachers, how to relish the joys and cope with the troubles of existence with dignity. He has learned to face trouble with a sense of God's providence. "If God wills it," is as common a phrase on Puerto Rican lips as is the phrase on American lips: "Someone ought to do something about it."

In the presence of joy or trouble the Puerto Rican is keenly conscious of one all pervading resource: his family. The brother, the cousin, the *compadre,* the parish priest, the storekeeper make the difference between pain or pleasure, between death or life. The hopes and crises of human life have led the Puerto Rican to weave around himself the protecting net of human loyalties of people who will always "be there." In knowing what to do, on whom one can count, a man enjoys prestige and respect. He is one on whom people can depend. For a child to become a man or woman, it means responding to these traditional values. Personal relationships are central to the lives of Puerto Ricans. They distrust systems; organizations are mysterious; but they feel confident and at home with the *compadre.*

We teach him differently, to develop himself, to aspire to advancement in American life, to compete—even against friend and relative—to "get ahead". To the Puerto Rican, this can introduce confusion and bewilderment, can frighten and repel. Any attempt, therefore, to provide educational services, to open the way to our way of life, will be in danger of serious difficulty, if it does not take account of this pattern of personal relationships.

The stability of this traditional family does not depend on "togetherness" in an American sense, but on clear understanding of roles, of expectations. By doing what is expected of a man, a woman, a son, a daughter, the Puerto Rican enjoys the satisfaction of being a *good* man, a *good* wife, a *good* child. The key to this stability is a virtue that Puerto Ricans call *respeto.* The English word "respect" does not really catch the meaning. *Respeto* means understanding what is expected of me as a husband, wife, or child; in carrying out obligations in the complicated network of personal loyalties described above. Husband provides support and authority because he has respeto; wife is faithful and properly submissive; child is dutiful and obedient. When this fails, family conflict and possibly disorganization are on the way.

The Puerto Rican child comes to us in the presence of a massive change of roles; he comes from a system where *respeto* is a basis for personal honor and prestige, into a system which not only disregards it but actually challenges it. Self-reliance, competitiveness, aggressiveness are the keys to success in American life. This problem of cultural transition is not new to Puerto Ricans. It is a familiar problem to the immigrant people who came before them. But it strikes the Puerto Rican when the patterns of assimilation through occupation are shifting rapidly; when organized activities, public and private, are inescapable; when educational preparation is crucial to survival. How to enable the Puerto Ricans to maintain their social stability while they pass through the process of assimilation is a problem which taxes their resourcefulness as well as ours.

The Puerto Rican child faces the complicating problem of race and color in a way no other newcomers, even Negroes, have had to face it. The Puerto Rican has been aware of people of every variety of color from completely white to completely Negro. In ordinary social relations he never averted to a person's color. If a man were upper class, the Puerto Rican expected that he would be "white" although some of the "white" people in the upper class were darker than people who were not called white. If a man were poor, he might be any color. At social gatherings, around the neighborhood, people of all different shades mingled together, took each other for granted, married and had children of noticeably different color. Discrimination on the basis of color, as it prevails on the mainland, is something the Puerto Rican would not understand. As classes begin to shift in Puerto Rico, the Puerto Ricans face the problem of redefining what color means. Will it continue to mean nothing; or will they slip into an American pattern of discrimination?

In any event, when they come to the mainland, they become immediately aware of a problem of color as they have never known it. They arrive when the civil rights movement is at its height, creating a conflict about integration centered in the school which the Puerto Rican does not understand; and imposing pressures for participation which leave him bewildered.

In the presence of these human experiences, if we can learn what our way of life means to the Puerto Ricans, we may be able to help them become part of it more smoothly and more peacefully.

Reverend Fitzpatrick is Professor of Sociology at Fordham University.